

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Curr
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Date of last inspection	9 December 2009
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This setting provides up to five medium to long-term placements for young people aged between 11 and 17 years. The accommodation consists of seven single bedrooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing. The home is in a residential area, approximately two miles from the town centre and is close to public transport. One of the main aims of the setting is to provide a specialist and integrated response to the care and educational needs of young people.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection. All of the key standards were checked and improvements made since the last inspection were noted. The home has a registered school within the grounds. This welfare inspection was aligned with an education inspection of the school.

This is a good service with some excellent features. Young people's education is highly encouraged and promoted. Leisure needs are met and a multi-disciplinary approach ensures young people's views are taken into account when planning their future.

A policy on equality and diversity is in place and the staff clearly demonstrate an appreciation that individual young people may have a range of possible needs arising from diversity.

The individualised support that young people receive is a notable area of strength. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the positive relationships fostered by the staff team. The service is closely monitored, thus enabling the registered provider to oversee the operation of the home.

The aim to have the appropriate number of staff hold a National Vocational Qualification must be maintained.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was asked to take action in relation to aspects of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, and organisation. This included staff training, behaviour management and record keeping.

All staff have received training in the safe handling of medication to ensure all practices are appropriate.

The use of audible alarms that are used to monitor young people's movements during the night has been reviewed and amended.

The proprietor undertakes monthly internal monitoring as part of the quality assurance system for the home; these reports are published and shared with the manager.

Although good progress has been made in relation to staff training, National Vocational Qualification ratios do not meet current standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have their health needs fully assessed on admission to the home. Staff are good at securing all the relevant information required to enable them to respond to any health needs that arise. Young people receive encouragement and support from staff to attend their routine medical appointments at suitable intervals. Prompt registration with local primary health care services helps to facilitate this and clearly written healthcare plans are completed to monitor young people's health and physical development.

Young people are offered food from different cultures and are involved in menu planning. There is plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables available, although young people are of an age where they decide for themselves what and when they will eat. Staff recognise the potential impact of this on general health and well-being and work with young people to promote regular healthy eating.

Young people are generally fit and healthy and do not take any forms of medication at this time. There are sound procedures in place for staff to follow to ensure that young people are safeguarded in this respect. There are consent forms on file for young people to receive medical intervention if necessary. All staff have received first aid training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have their privacy and confidentiality respected. The identity of visitors is checked and files are stored securely in a locked cabinet in the office. There is plenty of space in the home should young people want time away from other people, and young people have exclusive use of en-suite facilities and a bathroom. It has been necessary to search through young people's possessions in an attempt to eliminate risks to health, however, the policy and guidance for staff and young people is scant.

There are effective measures in place to ensure that young people are safeguarded. Staff are conversant with the circumstances under which child protection procedures should be invoked and all staff have up-to-date training in relation to safeguarding. On admission young people are advised of the complaints procedure but not all young people have access to an advocate outside of the home to whom they can voice any concerns.

Bullying is not an issue at the home at this time. Young people state that although they do not always get on with each other there is a zero-tolerance approach to bullying either within or outside of the home. Staff are pro-active in persuading young people not to run away from the home so young people choose not to run away.

Young people benefit from an individualised approach to positive handling. Staff work hard to establish positive relationships with young people and were observed using praise and encouragement to improve behaviour. Physical intervention is rarely used as an option to manage behaviour although staff are trained in approved techniques. Staff keep clear and accurate records about any incidents or sanctions used to support behaviour management.

Fire drills are undertaken when young people are first admitted to the home and thereafter at appropriate intervals. Fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire doors are also checked, and

other environmental tests and risk assessments are also carried out. Individual risk assessments on young people's known or likely behaviours are comprehensive with clear guidance for staff about how to minimise and manage such risks.

There are sound procedures in place to protect young people from those unsuitable to work with vulnerable groups. Personnel files contain all the information required by these regulations and any issues arising during the interview process are discussed and risk assessed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home operates a highly effective key working system. All members of staff have a broad awareness of each young person's needs. Young people report that they are comfortable in approaching any member of staff. One young person said that their key worker sets up regular meetings for them to 'discuss my future'. It is clearly evident that key workers have developed positive relationships with the young people. Young people are offered the opportunity to be involved in saying what kind of individual support they need, and how this is best delivered. This enables young people to feel valued and listened to. However, not all young people have access to an advocate independent of the home for them to contact directly about personal problems.

The home is registered as a school, so education has a very high priority, and there are successful educational outcomes for young people. One of the main strengths of this setting is the human resources and expertise that are available in terms of support staff and in-house education and therapeutic staff. This means that there are a range of highly skilled personnel, who provide excellent support and encouragement to young people to help them to succeed and reach their potential.

Young people's social skills are well promoted as they are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities within their local community. One young person stated that 'one of the best things about the home are the activities'. Staff share their own interests and enthusiasms with young people and encourage them to try out new activities and interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Close attention is paid to ensuring that placement plans fully reflect young people's needs. Staff present young people with plenty of opportunities to be involved in this process and they have regular opportunities to discuss their needs with staff. Specific requirements in relation to diversity and equality are also incorporated into the overall plan of care.

A rigorous and systematic review process is effective in highlighting young people's progress and in identifying any shortfalls or concerns. Contact with families is recognised as an important aspect of a young person's life and a means by which young people can have a positive sense of identity reinforced.

The nature of this placement and the good practice of staff mean that there is frequent dialogue with young people about their care, needs and wishes. They are offered the opportunity to participate in review meetings and voice any concerns they may have with the home's proprietor.

Young people are provided with a range of information about how the home operates. Introductions to the home and the settling in period are managed well. There is clear recording of where young people have been previously accommodated and documentation in relation to the admissions and discharge process is clearly maintained.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Support staff provide a stimulating and energetic programme of small group teaching situations within the home such as learning to cook and prepare meals for the group. The opportunities provided for the young people to buy their own clothing and toiletries give them experience in expressing their individual preference and develop skills, such as budgeting, that will be essential throughout their life. However, one young person's leaving care plan is not up to date. Therefore the formal pathway plan does not make clear what the responsibilities of the home are.

The home is decorated and furnished to a very high standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment appropriate to the age and culture of the young people living there. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained to a very good state of structural and decorative repair. A well stocked vegetable garden has been created. Young people state that they are actively involved in this. The manager has a clear maintenance and repair programme and any damage is repaired promptly.

Each young person has a single room of a suitable size with en-suite facilities. Each room has a single bed, seating if necessary, storage and lockable safe storage for personal possessions. Staff have separate sleeping-in and bathroom facilities.

The young people confirmed that they are able and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms.

The manager works hard to maintain appropriate links within the community. This enables the young people to have positive relationships with the immediate neighbourhood.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Management of the home is good and ensures that young people receive good quality care.

The home provides any referring professional with comprehensive information about the home in the form of the Statement of Purpose. Young people are equally well informed through a children's guide that helps to familiarise them with what they can expect from the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's cultural and religious needs are taken into account throughout the care planning and review process. Staff have a good understanding of individual needs and ensure that these are met on a practical level. Staff also promote good practice around equality and diversity in terms of attitude and example.

Staffing levels are sufficient and fully ensure that young people's need are consistently met. The staff are in varying stages of achieving a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and 4 in Caring for Children and Young People. Senior practitioners are also undertaking management training. Currently the overall qualification recommendation is not met but appears to be on target.

New members of staff are provided with sound induction and work a period of probation, at the end of which they are assessed. Additional training is available to ensure staff are equipped to meet the individual and varied needs of young people, and staff receive regular supervision and attend team meetings. This ensures young people are cared for by staff with a range of skills and who are themselves adequately supported.

There are a number of quality assurance processes, including a monthly monitoring report produced by the proprietor. Although these reports make clear recommendations, there is no evidence that young people are consulted as part of these visits and the reports do not contain their views. Therefore it is not clear whether young people can actively contribute their views about the quality of their care during independent visits. The manager also produces a comprehensive monthly report that includes issues raised by key workers. Amongst some of the issues for inclusion are consultations with children and social workers and recording systems.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
32	interview with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	31 July 2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- produce comprehensive guidance for staff and young people in relation to searching bedrooms and possessions (NMS 9.8)
- endeavour to access advocacy services for each young person (NMS 7.8)
- review the contents of the identified pathway plan, ensuring it relates to the needs of the individual and is signed by the relevant parties (NMS 6.1)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent. (NMS 29.5)